

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**CUBA AFTER CASTRO:
IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGE**

by

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ABSTRACT

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Located just ninety miles from its southern border, Cuba has long been of key security and humanitarian interest to the U.S. Since Fidel Castro assumed power in Cuba in 1959, U.S.-Cuban relations have been virtually nonexistent. Recent historical events have occurred that could potentially lead to political and socioeconomic reform in Cuba. The increase in the Cuban population in the U.S. has lead to an increased Cuban representation in the U.S. Congress. In addition, the biological aging of Fidel Castro, as well as the downward spiral of the Cuban economy and well-being of Cuban citizens point to what may be a ripening chance for democracy in Cuba. This Strategy Research Project (SRP) will explore past and current U.S. policy on Cuba and examine potential alternatives to that policy, should an unforeseen change occur in Cuban leadership. This paper will address how different sectors of the U.S. Government and its citizens view Cuba; how Castro views the U.S.; his plans for Cuban succession; some of the challenges that a post-Castro Cuba might face should it embrace democracy; and, lastly, since Cuba is not an economic or military threat to the U.S., the question of why we should consider and embrace a political agenda regarding potential outcomes in Cuba when Fidel Castro departs.

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CUBA AFTER CASTRO: IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGE

For those who stay behind, the survival strategy is simple: Keep your head down, don't make waves, and wait for the biological solution.¹

- James Cason

Located just ninety miles from its southern border, Cuba has long been of key security and humanitarian interest to the U.S. Since Fidel Castro assumed power in Cuba in 1959, U.S.-Cuban relations have been virtually nonexistent. Recent historical events have occurred that could potentially lead to political and socioeconomic reform in Cuba. The increase in the Cuban population in the U.S. has led to an increased Cuban representation in the U.S. Congress. In addition, the biological aging of Fidel Castro, as well as the downward spiral of the Cuban economy and well-being of Cuban citizens point to what may be a ripening chance for democracy in Cuba. This Strategy Research Project (SRP) will explore past and current U.S. policy on Cuba and examine potential alternatives to that policy, should an unforeseen change occur in Cuban leadership. This paper will address how different sectors of the U.S. Government and its citizens view Cuba; how Castro views the U.S.; his plans for Cuban succession; some of the challenges that a post-Castro Cuba might face should it embrace democracy; and, lastly, since Cuba is not an economic or military threat to the U.S., the question of why we should consider and embrace a political agenda regarding potential outcomes in Cuba when Fidel Castro departs.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Cuba is one of the five remaining communist countries and the sole communist country in the Western Hemisphere.² History has provided us with several incidents that help illustrate why there has been such a stormy relationship between the U.S. and Cuba. The first such incident was the sinking of the U.S.S. Maine in the Havana Harbor on February 15, 1898, in the Cuban revolt against the Spanish government, and the subsequent occupation of U.S. Forces of Cuba for three years (1899-1902).³ Relations between the two countries improved after this period. The U.S. became deeply involved in the economic and political health of Cuba from 1903-1959⁴ (U.S. was receiving better-than-market prices for sugar). The U.S. recognized Fulgencio Batista when he regained government power in 1952 and continued to support his corrupt regime even after he became increasingly repressive to the Cuban people. During this era, U.S. citizens and businesses owned significant amounts of property in Cuba, including resorts, hotels and casinos. As described by Mark Falcoff in his book, *Cuba, the Morning After*,

Cubans were well-off before Castro. In 1958, Cuba ranked near the top in Latin America in most indices of development; urbanization, services, health and literacy.⁵ Overall, relations between the two countries in the half century before Castro assumed power were generally good.

Since Fidel Castro assumed power in 1959, the U.S. and Cuban relationship has been tenuous. The period between January 1959 and October 1962 was the most taxing one for the relationship between the two countries. President Dwight D. Eisenhower severed diplomatic relations with Cuba in January 1961 because of the increasing friction between the U.S. and Castro's regime. Late in Eisenhower's term, his staff conceived an invasion plan of Cuba which was reluctantly approved by his successor, President John F. Kennedy. The plan, later called the "Bay of Pigs Invasion," was an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the government of Fidel Castro by U.S.-backed Cuban exiles. On April 17, about 1300 exiles, many armed with U.S. weapons, landed on the south coast of Cuba hoping to find support from the local population but were quickly stopped by Castro's army. Two days after the initiation of the invasion, 90 of the Cuban exiles had been killed and the rest were taken as prisoners. The failure of the invasion seriously embarrassed the Kennedy administration.⁶ Immediately following President John F. Kennedy's election, advisers began planning "Operation Mongoose" which was a covert plan to eliminate Castro. Covert planning for Operation Mongoose continued until the end of the Cuban Missile Crisis, at which time it ended without being executed.⁷

The souring relations between the U.S. and Cuba culminated in 1962 with the "Cuban Missile Crisis." Cuba's fear of a U.S. invasion and its increased reliance and support from the Soviets set the course for a potentially catastrophic confrontation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. On October 22, 1962, President John F. Kennedy informed the world that the Soviet Union was building secret missile bases in Cuba. After deliberating over several military options, Kennedy decided on a less dangerous response and ordered a naval blockade of Cuba to prevent Russian ships from delivering additional missiles to the island. In response to the American naval blockade, Khrushchev authorized his field commanders in Cuba to launch their tactical nuclear weapons if invaded by U.S. forces.⁸ The world's greatest nuclear superpowers stared each other down for seven days. Finally, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev conceded to President Kennedy's demands by ordering all Soviet supply ships away from Cuban waters and agreeing to remove the missiles from Cuba's mainland.⁹

U.S. relations with Cuba since the Missile Crisis have been primarily wrought with animosity. On several occasions it appeared that relations between the U.S. and Cuba were beginning to thaw; however, several key events that occurred between 1966 and the present

time have chilled relations between the two countries. One such incident was when U.S. Air Force Pilot Everett Jackson was shot down over Cuba in 1966 while dropping arms and equipment.¹⁰ In the East-West polarized world that existed prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba spent millions of dollars in the 1970s and 1980s supporting dictatorships and regimes around the world. Cuba's alignment with the U.S.S.R. in supporting the Movimento Popular da Libertação de Angola (MPLA)¹¹ with nearly 35,000 troops in Angola in 1975¹² followed by its deployment of nearly 20,000 troops to Ethiopia in 1977¹³ kept Cuban relations with the U.S. at a low. Assistant Secretary of State William Rogers held secret talks on normalization with Cuban officials in 1974; however, no progress was made because of Cuba's involvement with Angola. Cuba later supported the Sandanista insurgency in 1979.¹⁴ Just one year later, Castro announced to his people that anyone who wanted to leave Cuba could do so. For the next six months, over 125,000 refugees (many from prisons and asylums)¹⁵ fled to the U.S. through the port of Mariel, Cuba. Again, in 1994, Castro declared an open migration policy and soon a second boatlift (many on rickety rafts) of nearly 32,000 Cubans to the U.S. took place. Thousands died at sea.¹⁶ In 1996, two airplanes carrying members of the anti-Castro organization "Brothers to the Rescue" were shot down by Cuban MiG aircraft over international waters.¹⁷ Many Americans still desire normalization of relations with Cuba today despite all of these events.

CUBAN-AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

In order to understand the current relationship between the U.S. and Cuba, we must examine it from several viewpoints. This examination will also provide some insight into the complexities that Cubans might face upon a change in leadership. At a minimum, an analysis must be made of the official U.S. position on Cuba, the Combatant Commanders' views of Cuba, U.S. citizens' view of Cuba, and finally, the Cuban view of the U.S. There are 1.5 million Cuban-Americans residing in the U.S. today,¹⁸ most who reside in specific geographic areas of the U.S. with nearly two-thirds living in Florida.¹⁹ More Cuban-Americans live in Miami than in any other U.S. city, but many have moved to the suburban towns outside of Miami and on Florida's west coast in Tampa. The Little Havana section of Miami remains the center of the Cuban-American population. Large Cuban populations now inhabit the cities of New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, and the state of New Jersey. Support for Cuba within the U.S. can be divided into three distinct groups: the *rejectionists*, who are the hard-liners and oppose the Cuban regime, and who believe that we should maintain economic sanctions or make them tougher; the *centrists* group, which seeks ways to dialogue with regime elements and which

may be important to post-Castro reform, but generally otherwise holds hard-line ideological convictions; and the *accommodationists* who favor developing links to the regime now.²⁰

The Cuban-American population is largely Republican, conservative and anti-Castro. The large Cuban population in Florida has enabled that political base to elect several Congressmen who carry extensive political clout in the House of Representatives and remain strongly anti-Castro. As a result, these Congressmen have been able to influence the U.S. political positions on Cuba. Cuban-American Congressman Lincoln Diaz-Balart (Florida Republican) has been serving in Congress since 1993 and his brother Mario Diaz-Balart, also a Florida Republican, was elected to Congress in 2002. Ilena Ros-Lehtinen, a Cuban-American, was also elected to the House of Representatives as a Florida Republican in 1989²¹ and has been an active spokesman on Cuban-American relations. Ros-Lehtinen played key roles leading to the passage of the Cuban Democracy Act and the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act (the Helms-Burton Law). In 2004 former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Cuban-American, Mel Martinez was elected to the U.S. Senate (Florida Republican), adding to the Cuban-American delegation's political clout. These members of Congress have been staunchly anti-Castro and uniformly support maintaining current economic and social restrictions on Cuba. While there is strong anti-Castro support in Congress, there are many *acomodacionistas* who would like to normalize relations with Cuba. While the majority of Cuban-Americans remain hard-line anti-Castro, as the Cuban-American population ages there has been a growing shift among younger Cubans to ease the relationship with Cuba. The multitude of opinions that exist about Cuba can be reflected in the U.S. policy.

U.S.-CUBAN POLICY

The U.S. policy towards Cuba is one of economic embargo and diplomatic isolation. First introduced by President John F. Kennedy, this policy dates back to the early 1960s in response to Castro's declaration that he and Cuba will follow Communism. Current U.S. policy is now enshrined in U.S. law, making any change difficult. Four specific U.S. laws directly influence the U.S. policy on Cuba. The Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917 was the first such law used by President Kennedy in 1962 to ban virtually all trade and commerce with the Castro regime.²² The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 was passed in response to the Cuban governments confiscation of U.S. citizens' properties without compensation. The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 states that no assistance or benefit can be given to Cuba until the President determines that the Cuban government has taken appropriate steps to provide equitable compensation or returns the property confiscated after January 1, 1959.²³ On March 1, 1996, President Clinton

signed the Cuban Liberty and Solidarity Act, commonly known as the Libertad Act. The Libertad Act primarily targets foreign individuals who traffic in property confiscated by the Cuban government. Some of the key provisions of the Libertad Act include setting forth the U.S. policy towards a transitional and democratically elected government in Cuba. The Libertad Act further codifies the U.S. economic embargo against Cuba.²⁴ The Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 permits the President of the U.S. to lift the embargo if he finds that the Cuban government holds free and fair elections and has moved toward establishing a free-market system while being committed to constitutional change.²⁵ These laws have guided U.S.-Cuban policy and there is no indication of any additional legal changes in the near future. In recent years, much work has been accomplished by the U.S. government to explore issues that will need to be resolved in the event of Cuban governmental change.

A change in Cuban leadership could mean a change in the type of government that the Cuban people embrace. Cuba's presence near U.S. borders warrants special attention in the event of such a governmental change. It is in the U.S.' interest that Cuba transform to a democratic form of government and that this transition occur as smoothly as possible. Any resultant chaos from a transition in government would most likely affect the U.S. The U.S. would like to avoid the "new" Cuba arising as, or evolving into, a failed state. To minimize some of these concerns, President George W. Bush formed a commission in 2002 to study the complexities of the Cuban government and to identify opportunities in which the U.S. could assist a post-Castro Cuban Government should it decide to embrace democracy. This study led to a formal publication in May, 2004 entitled "Report to the President from the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba" which addresses several key initiatives with associated funding to hasten the end of the Castro dictatorship. In this report, the commission makes several key recommendations ranging from economic and infrastructure improvements in Cuba to recommendations on improving Cuba's pollution problems. In addition, the commission seeks to further restrict assistance by limiting economic authorizations and family visits of Cuban-Americans to Cuba.²⁶ As a matter of general policy, the President stated in a May, 2004 speech, "We believe the people of Cuba should be free from tyranny. We believe the future of Cuba is a future of freedom. It is in our nation's interest that Cuba be free."²⁷

The National Security Strategy (NSS) of the U.S. and the Department of State positions on Cuba are well synchronized and are very clear on a desired outcome for Cuba. The State Department's position on Cuba is: "Full normalization of relations with Cuba--diplomatic recognition, open trade and a robust aid program--will only be possible when Cuba has a government that is fully democratic."²⁸ On May 6, 2002, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell said

Cuba "cannot remain forever the sole holdout from the hemisphere's march of democracy."²⁹ The regime of Cuban dictator Fidel Castro "makes a mockery of freedom," he charged. "It impoverishes the Cuban people. As President Bush has said on many occasions, our goal is to promote a rapid, peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba. The people of Cuba deserve no less."³⁰ On October 10, 2003 President Bush returned to the somewhat softer formula espoused by his predecessor, former President William J. Clinton when he announced several new initiatives "intended to hasten the arrival of a new, free, democratic Cuba".³¹

Official U.S. policy on Cuba at the Executive Branch is clearly consistent and focused on maintaining the embargo and strengthening restrictions on travel and trade. Cuba may be getting mixed signals from the Legislative Branch. In 2002, a newly formed bipartisan committee, called the Congressional Cuban Working Group, introduced an agenda to lift the travel ban to Cuba, advance democracy on Cuba, permit private financing of food and agriculture sales, and promote cooperation on drug interdiction.³² Later, in October 2003, the Senate voted 59-36 in favor of lifting the Cuban travel ban, with similar results in the House of Representatives. Diplomatic visits to Cuba by former President Jimmy Carter in 2002³³ and by several state governors and city mayors on several occasions in the last few years are indicators that the U.S.' position on Cuba is clearly divided.

The combatant commanders' position on Cuba is not as ambiguous as those of their counterparts in the politico-diplomatic arena. Undoubtedly, there is much interest on focusing on control of the Caribbean Sea access to the U.S. The Caribbean Sea has traditionally served as an extremely accessible bridge for refugees entering the U.S. Combatant commanders are responsible for the security interests of countries that reside in their respective areas of responsibility. Under the Unified Command Plan, the country of Cuba has traditionally come under the purview of the U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM). For national security purposes Cuba was recently realigned from USSOUTHCOM to the U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM).³⁴ A congressional staffer with special interest in USSOUTHCOM suggested the move may indicate that USNORTHCOM would concentrate on migration and border issues as part of its mission to enhance homeland defense. USSOUTHCOM still has responsibilities for security assistance to Mexico, Cuba, and the Bahamas even though those countries are outside the command's area of responsibility.³⁵ Additionally, USSOUTHCOM has responsibility for the Joint Task Force-Guantánamo (JTF-Guantánamo) located at the U.S. Naval Base Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. The task force "is established in support of detainee operation activities as the holding facility for Al Qaeda, Taliban or other terrorist personnel that come under U.S. control as a result of the ongoing War on Terrorism, and also serves as the

Department of Defense's focal point for interrogation operations in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.¹³⁶ USNORTHCOM's and USSOUTHCOM's vigilance are as critical as ever given these national security issues, which are compounded by the anticipation of political and social upheaval during the imminent transition of power.

CUBA'S VIEW OF THE U.S.

Castro has long held a negative view towards the U.S. and, perhaps, justifiably so. Castro desires to continue his suppressive policies toward the Cuban people and retain communism. The U.S. has long wanted to remove Castro from power and to bring about a transition in Cuba to a democratic form of government. These two positions are in direct contradiction to each other and both sides have stood firm, resulting in a growing tension. The official view from Cuba is that it only has one enemy in the world and that enemy is the U.S. The general tone of Castro's messages invokes an impression of U.S. oppression, extensions of basic U.S. policy involving diplomatic isolation and economic embargo. Fidel Castro's view of the U.S. has been consistent. Castro has made numerous vocal attacks on the U.S. and personal verbal attacks on the President of the United States. On one occasion, Fidel Castro spoke to Cuban citizens regarding "how demented George Bush is from all the effects of alcohol through the years."³⁷ Castro has long despised most aspects for which the U.S. stands. "Castro's loathing is not just for the U.S. Government," as some of his supporters say; "he rejects American culture in total, to him it is the supreme manifestation of the inequality, individualism, materialism, and imperialism he claims to detest."³⁸

Many Cubans are brainwashed as a result of the Cuban government's constant barrage of propaganda. Many other Cubans, educated by their Cuban-American families and through their limited access to the Internet, realize that the U.S. is not their enemy. Access to recent information, substandard living conditions of the Cuban people, and Fidel Castro's recent injury have elevated the discussion about leadership change in Cuba.

TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

When Fidel Castro departs, a move from communism to a democratic form of government by new Cuban leadership would not occur overnight. To change a country's economy, productivity and government are complex issues that take time and resources. We need only look at Russia and former Soviet Union countries to appreciate the difficult transitions they are facing. A study conducted by the Rand Corporation in 2004 made the following comments about life after Castro: "A post-Castro regime that tries to remain communist may soon find itself in a cul-de-sac where old policies and instruments no longer work. If or when such a

regime falters, there is a remote possibility that a democracy-oriented government could replace it.³⁹

How difficult would it be for Cuba to effectuate the transition to democracy? To explore a transition from communism to democracy in Cuba, we must evaluate the current economic standard of living in Cuba and explore some of the negative results that communism has left on the Cuban labor force. We must further question the difficulties that Cuba might face competing in today's global economy. Remarks by Falcoff may give us a glimmering of what we might confront:

Since the collapse of the Soviet Empire, media attention has focused on the controversy over lifting the U.S. trade embargo. This debate is largely irrelevant. Far more important are the formidable problems the U.S. is certain to face in dealing with Castro's legacy. The U.S. will have to deal with Castro's legacy. The Cuban people are very poor and have difficult lives. It is important to understand just how miserable conditions are in Cuba to realize the complexity of a transition to a democratic form of government. Communism has wrought enormous destruction on the island--a failing economy; widespread poverty; environmental degradation; political repression; [and] an impoverished population with expectations of free housing, free education, and free health care.⁴⁰

One need only analyze the many complexities that the former Soviet Union governments face in their transitions to democracy to appreciate Cuba's challenge.

CURRENT LIFE IN CUBA

The survival of a post-Castro leader will undoubtedly be influenced by two key aspects of Cuban life: the substandard and suppressive living conditions that most Cubans face today; and the general overall economy and infrastructure of Cuba. The Cuban government is based on Marxist-Leninist communism. Every facet of the average Cuban's life is mandated by the government. If a Cuban resides in a certain city or town in Cuba, he or she is not allowed to move to a new location without permission of the government. A Cuban's employment and housing are provided by the government. Every citizen of Cuba is employed by the government, including those working in tourist areas. The tight control on everyday life has led to much corruption.⁴¹ In addition, there is little motivation or incentive to the Cuban people to perform at a high level of work for the average equivalent income of 8-14 dollars monthly.

The U.S. embargo on Cuba has been in place since 1962 with questionable success.⁴² The embargo is a complex issue that raises much controversy from those who are pro- and anti-Castro, and has led to some resentment by Cubans. While the purpose of the embargo was to cause an economic downfall to precipitate an uprising intended to topple the Castro regime, it has, rather, created animosity towards the U.S. by many Cubans. Fidel Castro has been very

effective with the media in painting a picture of “David and Goliath” whereby Cubans rally behind their leader to fend off a possible U.S. invasion of Cuba. Cuban scholars such as Daniel Griswold from the Cato Institute believe that Castro’s hold on power is so strong that the embargo only serves to punish the Cuban people because they are repressed.⁴³ Castro’s people have been increasingly repressed and deprived over the years, and many eagerly await his demise. However, sending money in any form (trade, tourism, etc.) would only lead to increased dollars in Fidel’s pocket and greater repression of the Cuban people. Much Cuban money has been spent to support Castro’s strong-armed politics, while Fidel has done very little to improve Cuban infrastructure or economy.

CUBAN ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

A move to democracy in Cuba could well take decades without U.S. support. The communist government’s mark on Cuba for the last 45 years will be a significant challenge for Cubans to overcome.⁴⁴ Cuba does not have a viable economy of its own. Its dependence on the former Soviet Union for trade and subsidies created an artificial economy, which has since disappeared.⁴⁵ Since Castro’s assumption of power and especially since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the quality of life of the Cuban people has steadily decreased. The Cuban economy is at its worst since Castro assumed power. Personal and economic conveniences, such as automobiles and telephones, are at 1958 levels.⁴⁶ Monthly food rationing to Cuban citizens is sporadic, often with only enough sustenance to last for about ten days. A United Nations report documents substantial undernourishment and malnutrition in many areas of Cuba.⁴⁷

One of the central challenges to Cuba in forming a democracy will be its economy. Cuban salaries average about 260 pesos a month (ten dollars),⁴⁸ while even highly skilled surgeons only receive the equivalent of twenty dollars per month as wages. Cuba has very little, besides sugar, to trade. For centuries, the primary industry of Cuba has been sugarcane, but even that has shown a steady decrease in production due to outdated factory equipment.⁴⁹ Cuban sugar production reached a high of 7-8 metric tons in the 1980s, while plummeting to a reported 2 million metric tons in 2003.⁵⁰

The former Soviet Union was Cuba’s primary trading partner and subsidized their economy. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Cuban standard of living spiraled downward. The infrastructure is in dire need of repair while Cuba struggles to just pay its bills. The U.S.S.R. once provided aid of about six billion dollars annually to Cuba.⁵¹ When the U.S.S.R. collapsed, Cuba fell into what Castro called the deepest economic crisis in the

country's history. Between 1990 and 1993, the country's economy shrank by at least 34 percent.⁵²

The current largest source of wealth in Cuba is its tourism industry. The two percent of the highest paid government tourist industry's jobs are held by Fidel's closest friends and supporters.⁵³ Tourists to Cuba receive the official version of what Cuba looks like as they are sent to segregated hotels, segregated restaurants and segregated beaches. The tourism industry has negative ramifications that Castro seems willing to overlook. Many young Cuban women have turned to prostitution to meet tourist demand and earn money,⁵⁴ as they find that they can make more money in one hour than they receive in a month's wages from the Cuban government.

The value of the Cuban peso is untenable. In November 2004, the Cuban Government implemented a dollar exchange tax, with the government as the only authorized body allowed to exchange pesos into dollars. This tax is significant to Cubans because there is little that a Cuban can buy in their country for the official Cuban Peso monetary unit. One Cuban lady said that "There wasn't one single store that she could find to buy a bar of soap that would accept pesos."⁵⁵ Almost anything and everything bought and sold in Cuba now uses the dollar. This new tax, in effect, reduces the value of Cuban wages by another ten percent.

The Cuban infrastructure and its supporting economic and social institutions have steadily declined under Castro leadership. The Cuban government is the provider of all housing to its people. Unfortunately, the housing situation in Cuba is nearing crisis. One United Nations study cites that more than 200 Cuban houses partially collapse each year. In addition to the poor housing maintenance, there is a housing shortage of more than 1.6 million homes, and of those that are available, about 39 percent do not meet human habitability standards.⁵⁶ This dire housing problem has forced many families to share their already overcrowded conditions. Newlyweds often carve out a few square feet of space within their family homes to start their lives together. School and hospital structures are no better than the housing. Medical services and hospital care in Cuba are difficult to obtain. If a Cuban wants to get medical care, he or she may have to wait several months to receive the needed surgery. Once admitted in the hospital, the patient is expected to provide sheets, food, and bandages.⁵⁷ The education budget decreased nearly forty percent from 1989-1997. Schools are in disrepair, but might occasionally receive a coat of paint. Students are taught to glorify Fidel Castro and to fire imaginary weapons at imaginary U.S. invasion forces. Government-owned oil, water, and power infrastructure are also in need of repair. Many Cubans live without electricity and water for periods of time. Since the 1950s, Cuban electric power development has ranked behind every

other country in Latin America except Haiti. By virtually every measure of macroeconomic stability, Cuba was in far better shape in 1958 than it is today.⁵⁸

Since the average Cuban cannot subsist on the mere pittance they receive as government salary, many are forced to steal from the government to make a living. "The state exhorts them to be good revolutionaries, but good revolutionaries cannot eat on state salaries; they must make money illegally, providing goods or services outside the official economy."⁵⁹ The U.S. has tried to ease the Cuban burden by accepting about twenty thousand legal Cuban immigrants annually.⁶⁰ Studies have shown that those desiring to leave the country are in the prime of their lives, and are looking for employment, homes, and a better way of life. Many thousands more of Cubans enter the U.S. illegally. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the advent of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, Castro tightened security measures within Cuba out of fear that Cubans might think he would follow the same path. These increased restrictions have resulted in an increased lack of upward mobility and unfulfilled hopes for Cuban youth.⁶¹ Fidel Castro's recent injury to his knee and a fractured collarbone, the result of a bad fall, has brought about much renewed discussion within Cuba and the U.S. on his mortality. To those Cubans who are silently awaiting his departure, his injuries brought new hopes for a better life. This scenario inspires many questions by both Americans and Cubans alike regarding Castro's successor and the type of government Cuba will embrace.

SUCCESSION SCENARIOS

Few believe that the U.S. would conduct offensive combat operations to overthrow Fidel Castro's current government. It appears that the primary solution to Castro is to wait for his eventual fall from power through the biological aging process. Fidel Castro has surprised many with how long he has remained in power; however, neither he nor his legacy will live forever. Noted Cuban scholars such as Jaime Suchlicki⁶² have written at length on potential outcomes to Cuban governmental leadership when Fidel Castro relinquishes power. If and when Cuba were to undergo the transition to a democratic government, following the post-Castro government, has long been debated. Scenarios have been developed to examine and explore potential types of post-Castro governments and to war-game "what-if" strategies.

One such scenario includes Castro's brother Raul assuming power with the state of affairs in Cuba remaining status quo. This is the most likely scenario in the early months after Fidel departs. Fidel has stated repeatedly that his 73-year-old brother Raul Castro is his designated successor.⁶³ Raul has been a faithful revolutionary at Fidel's side since the beginning of the revolution. He has held several key positions within the Cuban government over the years,

including his current position as Cuban Minister of Defense. The real speculation will commence in the early weeks and months after Raul assumes the leadership role. Raul will be faced with immediate decisions that will determine his tenure as leader of Cuba. He will have to move quickly and make significant economic reforms that show a marked increase in the average Cuban's standard of living, or face an uprising by the Cuban people.

There are other members of the Castro bloodline residing in and out of Cuba. Castro has been with his current common-law wife Dalia Soto del Valle for 30 years and they have five sons: Angel, Antonio, Alejandro, Alexis, and Alex.⁶⁴ Fidel is known to have at least four other children, including his first-born son Fidelito and his daughter Alina Fernández who, since defecting several years ago, has become a vocal critic of Castro. It does not appear that any of Fidel Castro's children are being groomed to replace him. There is little evidence that anyone other than Raul has any chance of succeeding Castro.⁶⁵

Another scenario is that Raul will assume short-term control of the government, but will be unable to sustain that control for a long period. Whether Raul is ready for the challenge to assume the premier leadership role is debatable. At 73, we must question whether Raul will even outlive his brother, Fidel. Some question Raul's ability to fill the void that will exist when Fidel departs and whether he has the desire or stamina to fill the premier role.⁶⁶ For these reasons, Raul will most likely assume leadership for the near-term while assessing what to do next. The Cuban military has firm control of the country and exerts tremendous influence on the everyday lives of most Cubans. The army's continued loyalty to Raul will be an important factor in determining his tenure as the Cuban leader. Raul Castro will have a better chance for initial succession of power if Fidel is still alive for a period of time because Cubans fear the wrath of Fidel and an uprising would be less likely to occur.

Another post-Castro scenario is that Cuba will move to another form of authoritarianism.⁶⁷ Fidel Castro, his brother Raul, and other key Castro cabinet members have visited China and evaluated their form of communism. China has embraced an export-oriented, market style that has given them double-digit economic growth for longer than any country in modern history. China has instituted economic reforms which promote initiative, production, and competitiveness. These economic reforms leverage the creative work force of the Chinese while still managing to suppress them.⁶⁸ The government that replaces Fidel Castro will not be able to control the Cuban people with the same iron fist that he does: "If post-Fidel governments are to remain authoritarian for some years, their political or military leaders, or both, will need to understand that although the Cuban people tolerated abject poverty under Fidel, they will not long tolerate such conditions under any other leader."⁶⁹ Regardless of who replaces Castro,

major changes to the Cuban economy will have to occur if Cuba is to prosper; or it will have to face being another failed state. Others have argued that potential uprisings occurring from various factions of the Cuban populace are inevitable and can prognosticate the formulation of a new government. The scenario which most frightens people is that no strong leadership will present itself and that Cuba will evolve into a failed state.

Cuba as a failed state would cause more problems for the U.S. than Fidel Castro remaining in power. Cuba will be extremely vulnerable in the immediate aftermath of Fidel Castro's departure. Should no positive leadership emerge and Cuba continue further deterioration, we could possibly see large-scale crime, drug cartels, and boatlifts that would make Mariel appear miniscule. A failed state could facilitate the means, mechanisms, and routes for drug cartels intent on passing drugs to the U.S. through Cuba, and open the door for other criminal or terrorist activities at our border. A failed state would likely see many thousands of Cubans flee to the U.S. Should Cuba become a failed state, its problems will become problems for the U.S. Because of the strong Cuban presence in America and because Cuba is a geographically close neighbor, it will be in the U.S.' interest to assist Cuba during and after a transition of power. Cuba will face social and economic struggles that will take decades to repair.

CONCLUSION

The U.S. has significant national security interests in Cuba and has performed extensive work analyzing its needs, should it decide to embrace democracy. When Fidel Castro relinquishes power by whatever means, new leadership will face tremendous challenges to appease the Cuban people. The Cuban people have been repressed for far too long and have been waiting for a long time for something better to happen in their lives. Dire living, work, healthcare, and education conditions have continued to plummet. The Cuban economic and social infrastructures have steadily declined during the last fifteen years. Cubans have seen increased "fees" levied upon them and the value of the peso dwindled to relative non-use. It will be extremely difficult for any leader to sustain Cuba at the status quo. Whatever new government that replaces Fidel Castro for the long-term will be faced with tremendous challenges to rebuild a country, a people, an economy and an infrastructure that have decayed under communism for the last forty-five years. Change will not come overnight and it may take decades to change the corrupt habits of communism. As Mike Walker said in his article entitled "No Es Facil," on his plane landing in Cuba, he expected the pilot to say "Welcome to Cuba, Please set your watches back 40 years."⁷⁰

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ENDNOTES

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